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## NOTES ON ORIENTAL ANTIQUITIES

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### 1. THE HORSE IN ANCIENT BABYLONIA

PROFESSOR MASPERO says in his *Dawn of Civilization* (English translation), p. 32: "If Egypt is a land of imported flora, it is also a land of imported fauna, and all its animal species have been brought from neighboring countries. Some of these — as, for example, the horse and the camel — were only introduced at a comparatively recent period, two thousand to eighteen hundred years before our era; the camel still later." Maspero controverts the opinion of M. Lefébure that the horse was known at the time of the twelfth dynasty or earlier.

As the horse is native to Asia, it was probably domesticated in Babylonia, or at least in the adjoining highlands, before it was domesticated in Egypt. And the passage from one country to the other might—for aught we can see—have been made in a generation or two. The route up the Euphrates, and through Syria to Palestine and Egypt was always open; or, the passage may have been made by a southern route, since all Arabia was doubtless then quite as adapted for the rearing and transport of horses as it is at present. We know that the date palm travelled in the contrary direction, from Egypt, or at least from Africa, to Babylonia at a much earlier period than 2000 B.C. At the time of Sargon I and his son Naram-Sin, we have accounts (*Revue d'Assyr.* IV, p. 77) of cargoes of "dates of Agade" being transported by water from Agade to Shirpurla. But I do not know that we have any account of horses being used in war or for labor as early as the time of Sargon, or, indeed, till a much later period; nor has

the horse been found before a late period in Babylonian or Assyrian art. Hommel says (Hastings's *Bible Dictionary*, art. "Babylonia"): "The horse was unknown to the earliest settlers." But the fact that the Sumerians called the horse 'ass of the East' is no more a proof that they did not have the horse in their early times than the fact that they called the lion *lig magh*, 'big dog,' proves that they did not always know the lion. It only proves that the horse came to Babylonia from the East.

I wish to present some fresh evidence which looks to a much higher antiquity for the domestication of the horse than any yet known to us.

On an extremely archaic shell cylinder (Fig. 1), belonging to the Metropolitan Museum in New York,



FIGURE 1. — SEAL IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK.  
*Original size.*

we have the representation of a god, probably the elder Bel, riding in a four-wheeled chariot, drawn by a dragon. Of the relation of this seal to the myth of Merodach and Tiamat I have spoken in an article in *The American Journal of Semitic Language and Literature* for January, 1898. I am now only concerned with the chariot, in which the god rides armed with a whip. The dragon is mythical, but this chariot is not. There must have been chariots at the period of the making of this seal, which we can safely assign to a pre-Sargonic period. Now what was the animal which at that early period was used to draw wagons or chariots? Apparently this is a war chariot.

The goddess on the back of the dragon is brandishing the lightnings. We can conceive a wagon drawn by oxen or asses, but not a war chariot so drawn. But, so far as we know, the transport of Babylonia was mainly by boats, not wagons. Indeed I should not have expected war chariots to have been much in use in the alluvial region of Babylonia with its network of canals. While there can be absolutely no question of the genuineness of this cylinder, I confess that it has been far from easy for me to satisfy myself what a war chariot, or even a wagon, could be doing in Southern Babylonia, or how a horse or an ox or a donkey could have been harnessed in a wagon or a chariot at that early period which we are accustomed to call some 4000 B.C., or more, if we follow Nabonidus's chronology, and put Sargon I at 3800 B.C., which may be several centuries

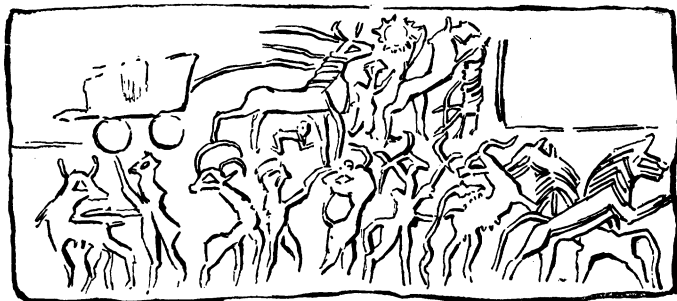


FIGURE 2.—SEAL BELONGING TO W. H. WARD. *Original size.*

too early.<sup>1</sup> I had supposed that the horse must have come from the central uplands of Asia, and that it was probably much later that the domesticated animal was introduced into the Euphrates valley.

But another seal (Fig. 2) lately obtained by me, and equally of incontestable genuineness and of great antiquity, shows us a horse actually harnessed in a similar four-wheeled chariot. The later chariots, of the Assyrian period, were two-wheeled.

<sup>1</sup> C. F. Lehmann, in his *Zwei Hauptprobleme der orientalischen Chronologie und ihre Lösung*, 1898, brings strong evidence to show that Nabonidus's chronology is just one thousand years out of the way.

This is a thick cylinder of white marble, 36 mm. long by 22 mm. thick, and is considerably worn. From the general style of art I should put the date considerably earlier than that of Sargon I. It is a cylinder with the human heads of that peculiar archaic shape which we call "bird-headed," where the nose protrudes like a beak, and the great eye is in the middle of the profile head. The lower register represents the contests between men and animals, which belong to the Sargonic and pre-Sargonic period. Although the cylinder is considerably worn, there can be no doubt that it represents a horse and chariot; the driver, however, is quite lost, except traces of his skirt.

The main question of doubt in reference to this cylinder, and to a number of others not belonging to well-known styles whose local origin we know, is whether it does not come from some of the neighboring countries. We do not yet know the style of the early Elamite art, or that of Gutium, or Mitanni, or Nahrina. We know that the characteristic designs of old Babylonian mythology were accepted as far as Lake Urumia to the northeast and as far as Cyprus to the west. The peculiar arrangement of fighting men and animals may have been put on an Elamite seal, and the horse and chariot may have been rather Elamite than Babylonian. Indeed, we do not know how much of early Babylonian mythology and art, not to say hieroglyphics, may have originated east of the Tigris River. The evidence seems to me to be conclusive that as early as the Sargon period, and probably much earlier, the horse was known to the Babylonians, or at least to their eastern neighbors, even if it was not an animal in frequent use for purposes of war or peace.

## 2. NEHUSHTAN

So far as I know Oriental archaeology has thus far brought us no illustration of the worship of a serpent on a pole, such as is described as practised by the Jews until the time that Hezekiah put an end to this idolatry by destroying the image of the

fiery serpent set up by Moses. It would seem from the story that this image had been brought with the children of Israel into Palestine; and preserved, possibly worshipped, through all the centuries from Moses to Hezekiah. However extraordinary it may seem to us that Moses should have come so close to fostering idolatry, there can be no doubt that such an image of a serpent on a pole was an object of worship in the times of Hezekiah and his contemporary, Sennacherib, of Assyria.

It might be gathered from the Hebrew account that this worship of a serpent on a pole was a sporadic cult, not to be looked for elsewhere. I have, however, come across other evidence for it which it is worth while to give to the public.

There has lately come into my possession a carnelian seal cylinder (Fig. 3), in an excellent state of preservation (2 cm. in length and 1 cm. in diameter), which is remarkable for several reasons. On it are engraved an *ashera*, crowned with a crescent, a worshipper before a serpent raised on a pole, and three columns of Hittite characters. This is then a Hittite seal, whose age may be from 1000 to 1500 B.C., probably later rather than earlier.



FIGURE 3. — CYLINDER BELONGING TO W. H. WARD. *Original size.*

What attracts us just now is the serpent. It has a head with one horn projecting in front, two branching horns on the top of its head, and two other horns, or ears, behind them. It is not uncommon to see mythological serpents represented with several horns. The body of the serpent has two circular folds, and it ends with the tail pointing below. The serpent is set up vertically on a short pole, with a stout triangular base for its support. Here we have an undoubted case of the worship among the Hittites of a *nehushtan*, such as is described in the Hebrew history.

Two of the accompanying columns of the inscription begin with the character which Professor Sayce makes to be the sign

for deity. Under it are two other characters which probably indicate a particular god. The first of these two characters is a familiar one, which Sayce supposed to represent the god Sandan, shaped something like a W, and which appears to have taken its shape from a serpent. It is possible that we have here written in the Hittite hieroglyphs the name of the god set on a pole and being worshipped. The middle column is found in other inscriptions, and Jensen imagines it designates a land, Arzauiia.

The serpent must have been worshipped at a very early period. We have on the older seals a figure of a seated god, whose body ends with a serpent coil (Fig. 4). I suppose this



FIGURE 4.—CYLINDER IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM. *Original size.*

is not old Babylonian, but comes from a neighboring region. Egypt knew a similar god (see *Defeneh*, *Egypt Fund*, pl. 25). Yet this is not a common design for a deity. Of course I do not forget the two serpents as a standard forming the Babylonian caduceus, from which was derived the caduceus of Hermes; but this seems to have had its origin in a single serpent regarded as a weapon, carried in the hand by some of the older Babylonian gods, then doubled for symmetry, and not itself a god to be worshipped. So the somewhat frequent emblem of a single vertical serpent does not easily connect itself with any god. The serpent was a celestial emblem, and made a constellation, but still not thus identified with any special god as he was in Greek mythology with the demigod Aesculapius. We know too little of Syrian or Hittite serpent

gods to give any name to the Ophion here represented. We can only say that this serpent on a pole as an object of adoration appears to be a perfect parallel to the Hebrew *Nehushtan*.

### 3. A HITTITE CYLINDER SEAL

The cylinder (Fig. 5) to which attention is here called is by no means certainly Hittite, although it is one of a class which, for want of other more distinctive attribution, I have provisionally called Hittite. They belong to the period when the wheel, or fiddle-bow, with its various tools, the revolving point or burr, the disc and the cylindrical drill, had taken the place of the freehand cutting, whether on hematite or agate, and the work was generally comparatively coarse. They are usually rather crowded with animals, fishes, and winged figures, and a cuneiform or other inscription is hardly known. The present cylinder, though of this general class, showing also the characteristically Hittite rope pattern, somewhat modified, yet presents certain unusual and interesting peculiarities.



FIGURE 5.—CYLINDER BELONGING TO MRS. HENRY DRAPER. *Original size.*

It is a cylinder of magnetic iron, said to have been found at Latakia on the Mediterranean coast of Syria. It is 28 mm. long by 12 mm. in thickness, and thus is somewhat larger and proportionately longer than is common in Hittite cylinders. Between the border lines we find a larger variety than usual of characteristically crowded and confused figures, mostly of animals. There are two gazelles, with heads turned back, fighting each other with opposed horns; a long-horned cow is suckling and licking her calf; a lioness suckles her whelp; and two lions attack an antlered deer. Besides these, there is an eagle with outstretched wings, also numerous little rosettes of dots, an open hand, and a closed fist.



Besides these, there is one object which is, so far as I know, here for the first time recognized in our Oriental glyptic art. It is the squid, or cuttlefish, represented between the legs of the two fighting gazelles. The two eyes are distinctly to be seen on the cylinder, though very small. The cuttlefish is quite familiar as depicted on the early "Mycenaean" or Aegean pottery (Fig. 6). It appears on vases from the island of Ialysos, also from Aeolis and Mycenae itself.<sup>1</sup> It belongs to a system of decoration that flourished at some time between 1000 to 1500 B.C. This pottery affected floral and marine



FIGURE 6.—CUTTLEFISH ON MYCENAEAN VASE (Perrot et Chipiez, 'Grèce Primitive,' fig. 487).

forms. Our cylinder has only this one point of distinctive connection with the Mycenaean type, the other figures being of such animals and birds as a people living inland would be familiar with, the same animals that are commonly found on Hittite seals, yet represented with more characteristic combination of activity than is usual, as suckling or fighting. This cuttlefish proves the influence of the art of the seacoast, or islands, and tends to fix the date at 1000 B.C. or earlier.

This occurrence of the cuttlefish helps us to recognize it on a few other cylinders, where I had supposed it to be a peculiar form of the sacred tree. One of these is in Fig. 7; and yet another appears in Lajard's *Culte de Mithra*, pl. xxvii, fig. 1.

<sup>1</sup> See Perrot and Chipiez, *Histoire de l'Art*, VI, 'Grèce Primitive,' figs. 473, 487, 489, 491, 492.

There is one other very remarkable peculiarity of this cylinder (Fig. 5), namely, its brief inscription. I recall no other cylinder of this general type, wrought with the revolving drill, which has any inscription whatever, although I know of at least five cylinders of an earlier period not wrought with the drill that bear Hittite inscriptions; of these four are either in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, or still belong to me. One or two others bear Babylonian inscriptions. The inscription on this cylinder has three or, perhaps, four characters. The two middle ones, W and X, are easily recognized as the Phoenician *shin* and *tav*. The two other characters, one on each side, — if they both be alphabetic, — are apparently not Phoenician: they may be Hittite. The one consisting of three nearly parallel vertical lines, \\\, somewhat resembles a Hittite hieroglyph. The other, which somewhat resembles a Phoenician *cheth*, has on each side of it a short line, which also suggests a peculiarity of Hittite writing. Two other possible hieroglyphics appear on the cylinder, but separated, an open hand and a closed fist, both Hittite characters.



FIGURE 7. — CYLINDER BELONGING TO W. H. WARD. *Original size.*

While it is not possible, perhaps, to get any meaning, or any certain name out of these four characters, yet we do seem to learn this, that at the time when this style of machine-made cylinders was common, the Phoenician letters had come into use; but that it was at a very early period in the use of the Phoenician alphabet, inasmuch as the two known letters, W and X, both have their most archaic form, such as they have on the Moabite Stone (885 B.C.) and on the Lebanon inscription of about 1000 B.C. We do not know how much earlier the Phoenician alphabet was in use — perhaps a century or two. This indication confirms our conclusion from the appearance of the cuttlefish; and it helps us to put the date of this cylinder near the lower portion of the period, 1500 B.C. to 1000 B.C.,

which we had already provisionally given. The two combine to give us a date about the time of the Israelite kings, David and Solomon, or perhaps a little earlier. Indeed it is not unlikely that this is the earliest known Phoenician inscription, as it suggests a transition from the Hittite to the Phoenician of the Lebanon bowl.

WILLIAM HAYES WARD.